Appendix B

Comment Letters

S A S M
SEWERAGE AGENCY OF
SOUTHERN MARIN

A Joint Powers Agency
- Almonte S.D.
- Alto S.D.
- City of Mill Valley
- Homestead Valley S.D.
- Richardson Bay S.D.
- Tamalpais C.S.D.

November 02, 2012

Ms. Marcia Liao
Water Resource Control Engineer
California Regional Water Quality Control Board,
San Francisco Bay Region
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612
By email: Marcia.Liao@waterboards.ca.gov

Subject: Comments on Tentative Order Issued for the Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin Wastewater Treatment Plant (Reissuance of NPDES Permit No. CA0037771)

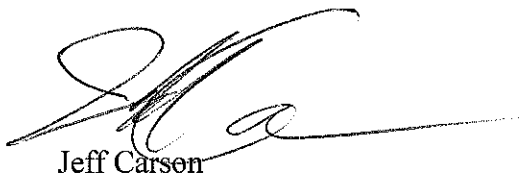
Dear Ms. Liao:

The Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin (SASM) has reviewed the Tentative Order issued by the Regional Water Board on October 4, 2012. The attached comments are submitted prior to the November 5, 2012 deadline to be considered for inclusion in the final adopted permit. The comments are primarily related to clarification on new requirements associated with wet weather blending approval.

SASM and its member agencies have invested significant capital resources during the last 4 years to reduce peak wet weather inflows and improve wet weather handling procedures. Activities included doubling the size of equalization ponds at the Plant, replacing all recirculation and effluent pumps at the Plant, and cleaning 20,000 linear feet of sewer lines. A private lateral replacement program was established in 2009 to provide financial assistance to homeowners during lateral repair and replacement. When the funds are depleted, the program will shift to requirements implemented under point-of-sale ordinances. Additional work is planned over the next 5 years to reduce inflow and infiltration throughout the entire sewer-shed.

SASM thanks the Regional Water Board staff for the time and considerations granted during development of this Tentative Order. Please contact me at 415-388-2402 (or by email, jcarson@cityofmillvalley.org) if you have any questions on the attached comments.

Sincerely,



Jeff Carson
Interim General Manager

Attachment A – Comments on Reissuance of NPDES Permit No. CA0037711

Cc: Bill Johnson, wjohnson@waterboard.ca.gov
Lila Tang, ltang@waterboards.ca.gov
Denise Conners, denisec@lwa.com

ATTACHMENT A

November 02, 2012

Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin

Comments Regarding Tentative Order Dated October 4, 2012 For Reissuance of NPDES Permit No. CA0037711

The Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin (SASM) appreciates the opportunity to submit the following comments on the Tentative Order (TO), released for review and comment on October 4, 2012.

For requested revisions to the text of the TO, underline is shown for suggested additions, and ~~strike-out~~ is shown for suggested deletions.

1. The portion of the wastewater collection system that is owned and operated by SASM is described as both a "wastewater collection system" and an "interceptor conveyance system" in the T.O. and Fact Sheet. The following changes are requested for consistency and to accurately describe current operations.

   II.B. Facility Description and Discharge Location (Page 4)

   2. Collection System. The Discharger owns and operates ~~an interceptor~~ sewer pipelines that collect wastewater and convey~~s~~ wastewater from the member agencies' satellite collection systems to the Plant. ~~There are no residential or commercial connections to the interceptor.~~ The Discharger's ~~conveyance~~ wastewater collection and interceptor conveyance system consists of approximately 3.5 miles of force mains, 5.5 miles of gravity lines, and six pump stations. Under agreement with the City of Mill Valley, the Discharger operates two lift stations within the Mill Valley service area (Frontage Road Lift Stations, Shelter Bay Lift Station). Each of the satellite collection systems is owned and operated independently and collects wastewater from its respective service area. The collection systems and the interceptor conveyance system are covered under the Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Sanitary Sewer Systems (Order No. 2006-0003-DWQ).

   VI.C.4.b. Special Provisions for POTWs (Page 18)

   The Discharger's wastewater collection and interceptor conveyance system is part of the facility subject to this Order. As such, the Discharger shall properly operate and maintain its wastewater collection and interceptor conveyance system (Attachment D, section I.D). The Discharger shall report any noncompliance (Attachment D, sections V.E.1 and V.E.2) and mitigate any discharge from the Discharger's wastewater collection and interceptor conveyance system in violation of this Order (Attachment D, section I.C).

   II.A. Description of Wastewater and Biosolids Treatment (Page F-4)

   2. Collection System. The Discharger owns and operates ~~an interceptor~~ sewer pipelines that collect wastewater and convey~~s~~ wastewater from the member agencies' satellite collection systems to the Plant. ~~There are no residential or commercial connections to the interceptor.~~ The Discharger's conveyance system consists of approximately 3.5 miles of force mains, 5.5 miles of gravity lines, and six pump stations. Under agreement with the City of Mill Valley, the Discharger operates two lift stations within the Mill Valley service area (Frontage Road Lift Stations, Shelter Bay Lift Station).

Each of the satellite collection systems is owned and operated independently from the Discharger and collects wastewater from its respective service area. The collection systems and the interceptor conveyance system are covered under the Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Sanitary Sewer Systems (Order No. 2006-0003-DWQ).

2. Operational protocols are recorded through the Plant's Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) Program. SASM staff utilizes relevant SOPs to implement appropriate wet weather management activities, in addition to the general Plant Operations and Maintenance Manual. The following change is recommended to clarify the Plant's operational methods and available documentation.

   III. Discharge Prohibition (Page 9)

   C. The bypass of untreated or partially treated wastewater to waters of the United States is prohibited, except as provided for in the conditions stated in Attachment D section I.G.

   Blended wastewater is biologically treated wastewater blended with wastewater diverted around biological treatment units or advanced treatment units. Such discharges are approved under the bypass conditions stated in 40 CFR 122.41(m)(4) when (1) the Discharger's peak wet weather influent flow exceeds the Plant's maximum treatment capacity of 24.7 MGD, (2) the discharge complies with the effluent and receiving water limitations contained in this Order, and (3) the Discharger is in compliance with Provision VI.C.5.a. Furthermore, the Discharger shall operate its facility as designed and in accordance with the Operation & Maintenance Manual and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Program for the facility. This means it shall optimize storage and use of equalization units, and shall fully use the biological treatment units and advanced treatment units, if applicable. The Discharger shall report incidents of blended effluent discharges in routine monitoring reports and shall monitor this discharge as specified in the MRP.

3. Pollutant monitoring is conducted at EFF-001, EFF-001D, or EFF-001B depending on the constituents of concern and Plant operational considerations. To accurately represent monitoring requirements, the Effluent Characterization Study provision should refer to the MRP not to a specific monitoring location. The requested change is shown below.

   VI.C.2.Effluent Characterization Study and Report (Page 14)

   a. Study Elements (Page 14)

   The Discharger shall continue to characterize and evaluate the discharge to verify that the "no" or "cannot determine" reasonable potential analysis conclusions of this Order remain valid and to inform the next permit reissuance. The Discharger shall collect representative samples of the discharge ~~at EFF-001~~ as defined in the MRP at a minimum of once per calendar year.

4. As required in Table 8, SASM will develop a method for measuring or estimating inflow from member agencies and provide the methodology to the Regional Water Board. However, development and implementation of a flow-based rate system may not be feasible. SASM requests addition of the following language in Task 8 to address this possibility.

Table 8. Specific Tasks to Improve Wet Weather Management and Reduce Blending (Page 20)

8. Consider <u>Feasibility of Implementing a</u> Flow-Based Rate Structure. The Discharger shall <u>consider whether it is feasible to</u> develop a flow-based rate structure that accounts for the costs of treating and managing I/I from its member agencies (charges are currently based on equivalent-dwelling units<u>). If feasible, the Discharger shall</u> ~~, and~~ present this proposal to its Board of Commissioners for consideration<u>. If not feasible, the Discharger shall justify the finding and submit a report to the Regional Water Board.</u>	August 1, 2014

5. Under the Joint Powers Agreement, SASM does not have authority to assess adequacy of member agency activities or to encourage additional inflow and infiltration reductions. This assessment and activity is more appropriately conducted by the State Water Resources Control Board under terms of the General Waste Discharge Requirements for Sanitary Sewer Systems. SASM will request and gather information from member agencies for Regional Water Board consideration as indicated below.

Table 8. Specific Tasks to Improve Wet Weather Management and Reduce Blending (Page 20)

9. Describe Status of Capital Improvement Programs of Member Agencies. The Discharger shall request information from all member agencies regarding existing and future capital improvement activities intended to reduce I/I. The Discharger shall annually report the information it receives. ~~If, based on this information, the Discharger concludes that a member agency is not making adequate improvements to reduce I/I, the Discharger shall note this conclusion in its annual report and work with that agency to encourage performance improvement. The Discharger shall describe its efforts to encourage improvement in its reports.~~ This report may be part of the Wet Weather Improvement Plan Progress Report.	Annually, with Annual Self-Monitoring Report due February 1

6. SASM requests revisions of the Facility Map (Figure B-1, Attachment B) to indicate the location of Raccoon Straits (between Angel Island and Tiburon) and to accurately identify the outfall location.

7. Current monitoring practices include continuous measurements of effluent chlorine residual and pH during blending events. SASM plans to continue this practice during the next permit term. The MRP should be changed as indicated below.

Table E-4. Effluent Monitoring at EFF-001B (Page E-5)

pH[7]	standard units	~~Grab or~~ Continuous	~~1/Year~~[6] <u>Continuous/D</u>
Total Residual Chlorine[8]	mg/L	~~Grab or~~ Continuous	~~1/Year~~[6] <u>Continuous/D</u>

8. SASM requests continuation of the dilution series requirements in the current permit for chronic toxicity testing**. The USEPA recommends ≥** 0.5 dilution, which allows for the design of custom dilution series. In their *Short-term Methods for Estimating the Chronic Toxicity of*

Effluents and Receiving Waters to Marine and Estuarine Organisms, the USEPA states it is common to use 6.25%, 12.5%, 25%, 50%, 100%, but the dilution series should be selected based on the objective of the study, the expected range-finding, receiving water concentrations, and available history of testing on effluent. This reasoning supports the use of maintaining the existing dilution series structure and the requested change shown below.

B.1. Chronic Toxicity Monitoring Requirements (Page E-7)

e. Dilution Series. The Discharger shall conduct tests at ~~50~~40%, ~~25~~20%, 10%, 5%, and 2.5%. The "%" represents percent effluent as discharged.

9. Since 2005, SASM has conducted Chronic Toxicity Screening Phase Monitoring with Sanitary District No. 5 of Marin County (Tiburon) and Sausalito-Marin City Sanitary District. The Fact Sheet (page F-34) reflects Regional Water Board approval to continue this practice. SASM requests the following change to the MRP for consistency and clarification.

II. Chronic Toxicity Screening Phase Requirements (Page E-16)

A. The Discharger shall perform screening phase monitoring:

1. Subsequent to any significant change in the nature of the effluent discharged through changes in sources or treatment, except those changes resulting from reductions in pollutant concentrations attributable to source control efforts, or

2. Prior to permit reissuance. Screening phase monitoring data shall be included in the NPDES permit application for reissuance. The information shall be as recent as possible, but may be based on screening phase monitoring conducted within 5 years before the permit expiration date. The Discharger has the option of completing the screening phase monitoring on its own or in conjunction with other local dischargers.

10. All references to the Facility WDID should be consistent.

Table F-1. Facility Information (Page F-3)

WDID	~~2 211000240~~ 2 215015001

11. SASM is supporting a private lateral replacement program while funding exists. When funds are depleted, the program will convert to requirements implemented under point of sale ordinances. The Fact Sheet language should be edited as follows to reflect this upcoming change.

II.F. Blending Summary (Page F-10)

- Collaborating with all six member agencies to reduce inflow and infiltration in their respective collection systems (e.g., completing a hydraulic profile of the service area, and developing and implementing a private lateral replacement program to assist private residence owners in replacing defective private lateral lines while funding exists).

12. During the current NPDES permit term, SASM and its member agencies were implementing a long-term (10-yr) capital replacement program. The following changes are requested to clarify this point.

IV.A.3. Discharge Prohibition III.C (Page F-14)

b. *There are no feasible alternatives to the bypass.* The Discharger asserts in its Utility Analysis that increasing treatment capacity through the purchase of and construction on bordering property is infeasible because the bordering property is in close proximity to tidal wetlands. Nonetheless, it identified various alternatives in an external audit report, dated August 31, 2008, conducted in partial fulfillment to the CAO requirements. During the term of the previous order, the Discharger and its member agencies implemented measures achievable and developed ~~short-term (5-year) and~~ a long-term (10-year) capital replacement programs to reduce blending for the coming years. These programs focus on, among other things, repair or replacement of sanitary sewer lines with poor-to-severe condition ratings and maintaining capacity assurance for the pump stations. The Discharger also intend~~s~~ to continue collaborating with its member agencies to rehabilitate their respective collection systems and assist private residence owners in replacing defective private laterals. Provision VI.C.5.a of this Order sets forth specific, feasible tasks for the Discharger to implement during the term of this Order to reduce blending.

13. All references to the NPDES permit application should be consistent. The requested change is indicated below.

VI.C. Whole Effluent Toxicity Testing Requirement (Page F-34)

2. Chronic Toxicity. This Order establishes a requirement for the Discharger to conduct chronic toxicity testing twice a year to ensure the discharge has acceptable levels of chronic toxicity. The Discharger conducted an effluent toxicity screening study during the previous order term. The study concluded that the *Americamysis bahia* (mysid shrimp) was the most sensitive marine species. The permit, therefore, requires the use of *Americamysis bahia* as the chronic toxicity test species. The Discharger is to re-screen in accordance with MRP Appendix E-1 after any significant change in the nature of the effluent or prior to submittal of the application for permit reissuance, due ~~January~~ July 31, 2017. The Discharger has an option to complete the screening on its own or in conjunction with other local dischargers.

SAN FRANCISCO BAYKEEPER®

November 5, 2012

Marcia Liao
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
San Francisco Bay Region
1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400
Oakland, CA 94612
mliao@waterboards.ca.gov
Submitted via electronic mail

Re: Baykeeper Comments on the Proposed NPDES Permit for the Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin

Dear Ms. Liao:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Tentative Order ("TO" or "Draft Permit") for the Sewerage Agency of Southern Marin's ("Permittee") Wastewater Treatment Plant and collection system, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System ("NPDES") Permit No. CA0037711. San Francisco Baykeeper ("Baykeeper"), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with the mission of protecting and enhancing the San Francisco Bay for the health of its ecosystems and surrounding communities, respectfully submits these comments on behalf of our 2,300 members. Please address the following concerns to ensure that the Draft Permit adequately protects water quality and public health in the Bay Area.

The Draft Permit Should Require Monitoring of Dissolved Oxygen and Dissolved Sulfides.

The Draft Permit should require the Permittee to monitor its discharges for dissolved oxygen and dissolved sulfides to be consistent with the Basin Plan and other recently-adopted Orders for wastewater systems. During blending events, effluent generally consists of under-treated sewage and urban stormwater, which has the potential to reduce dissolved oxygen to levels that pose a significant threat to aquatic wildlife. There is a strong likelihood that blended discharge is characterized by high oxygen demand, resulting in dissolved oxygen concentrations that may violate the Basin Plan objectives of 5 mg/L. Basin Plan § 3.3.5. To ensure compliance with the Basin Plan, the Regional Board should require the Permittee to test for dissolved oxygen every day and during each day of every blending event. Given that dissolved oxygen is a standard indicator of wastewater quality, it is unusual that such a standard does not already apply. The Basin Plan also includes a water quality objective for dissolved sulfides that may be exceeded by the Permittee's discharges – which cannot be determined without any monitoring of this parameter. Basin Plan § 3.3.15. Therefore, Tables E-3 and E-4 in the Monitoring and Reporting Program should be revised to include daily monitoring of both dissolved oxygen and dissolved sulfides. These changes would be consistent with the monitoring requirements for almost every municipal wastewater-related order adopted by the Regional Board over the past year. See Order Nos. R2-2012-059 (City of Pinole), R2-2012-062 (South Bayside System

Authority), R2-2012-027 (Rodeo Sanitary District), R2-2012-0013 (North San Mateo County Sanitation District), and R2-2012-0017 (Vallejo Sanitation and Flood Control District).

***

Thank you for considering Baykeeper's comments. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Abigail Blodgett at (415) 856-0444, extension 109.

Sincerely,

Abigail Blodgett
Associate Attorney, San Francisco Baykeeper